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INDIAN TERRITORY.

BY

HENRY GANNETT.

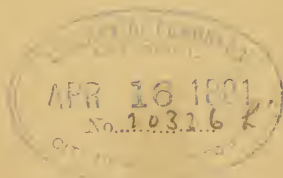
NEW YORK :
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS.

1881.

[Price, 20 Cents.]

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JENKINS & THOMAS,
PRINTERS,
8 *Spruce Street*,
NEW YORK.

1-24367-111

INDIAN TERRITORY.

INDIAN TERRITORY is a tract of land in the southern central portion of the United States, which has been set apart as a reservation for the use of various tribes of Indians. It lies between the parallels of 33° and 37° N. lat. and the meridians of 17° and 23° W. long. of Washington (94° and 100° W. of Greenwich). It is bounded N. by Kansas, E. by Missouri and Arkansas, and S. and W. by Texas. The area is estimated approximately at 69,000 square miles. The eastern portion is fertile and well watered, having an annual rainfall of 40 to 50 inches, and a mean annual temperature of about 60° Fahr. The surface is mainly rolling prairie, with broad stretches of rich land along the streams, and an abundance of timber. This section of the territory is separated from the western part, which presents a different aspect, by a broad belt of forest, known as the "Cross Timbers," which extends nearly across the territory in a north and south direction, marking the outcrop of the Carboniferous formation. Its breadth ranges from 40 to 60 miles.

West of this singular strip of forest the country assumes the appearance of the "Great Plains,"—that long incline which stretches eastward from the base of the Rocky Mountains. The surface is a monotonous, rolling, treeless expanse. The valleys are shallow, and the divid-



Map of Indian Territory.

ing ridges are broad and slightly marked. The climate is comparatively dry, the average annual rainfall being but 20 to 25 inches ; and irrigation is needed for the successful cultivation of most crops. The mean annual temperature

is somewhat lower than in the east, while the contrast in this regard between summer and winter, day and night, becomes much more marked. Timber is found only in the river valleys, on the faces of bluffs, and among the hills.

The generally level surface of prairies and plains is broken in the southern and south-eastern parts of the territory by ranges and groups of hills, which rise from a few hundred to 1500 feet above the surrounding country. These hills, known as the San Bois Hills, Shawnee Hills, Wichita Mountains, &c., form a part of the Ozark Mountains, which extend eastward over into Missouri and Arkansas.

The principal rivers of the territory are the Arkansas with its branches, the Neosho, the Salt and Red Forks, and the Canadian, with its North Fork, and, in the southern part of the territory, the Red River, which forms the boundary with Texas, and its branch, the Washita. All these are of little or no importance as regards navigation. The eastern part of the territory is well watered, but the western part, except at times of flood, in late spring and early summer, has few flowing streams.

The geology of the region is very imperfectly known, as no survey has been made, with the exception of two or three hasty reconnaissances. The general outline of the distribution of geological formations is as follows: The eastern third of the territory is occupied by the Carboniferous formation. In the south-eastern corner, near Red River, it is covered by the Cretaceous. In the eastern portion there are several outcrops of granite, marking the location of groups of the Ozark Hills. The western two-thirds of the territory are covered by Triassic and Jurassic beds, with the exception of the granite mass of the Wichita Mountains. The mineral resources are almost totally unknown. It is highly probable that the territory contains extensive deposits of coal, and it is very possible that the precious metals may be found in the Ozark Hills.

The fauna and flora partake of the double character of the surface and climate. In the eastern part they tend toward subtropical types, while the western portion presents forms more or less peculiar to the arid plains. In the eastern part deer, and brown and black bears are quite abundant, except in the neighborhood of settlements; and wild turkeys are plentiful.

In the western part antelopes and bison are the principal large game ; wild horses are still occasionally met with, and various species of grouse, sage hens, owls, rattlesnakes, gophers, and prairie dogs are abundant. The vegetation of the eastern part is profuse, especially in the bottom lands. The forests present a great variety of species very similar to those found throughout the lower Mississippi valley ; among them are several species of oak and pine, cypress, red cedar, black walnut, gum tree, &c. Among the wild fruits, which also present much variety, are plums, persimmons, grapes, &c. On the plains of the western part of the territory the principal natural productions are the grasses, which, growing in tufts or bunches, are known collectively as bunch or buffalo grass. While this is the prevailing growth, in the more desert localities its place is usurped more or less by artemisia, cactus, and yucca.

Inhabitants.—Besides the Indians who originally inhabited this territory, the United States Government has from time to time moved thither entire tribes, or parts of tribes, from more or less distant portions of the country, assigning to each tribe a definite area or “reservation.” The immigrants now outnumber very largely the

original occupants of the soil. The reservation is, to a certain extent, a prison-house. An Indian is not allowed to leave it without a pass from the agent ; nor are whites allowed to settle on it, or even to visit it. Exception is made, however, in the case of white men who marry Indian women. In the case of most of the tribes, the Government holds in trust funds belonging to them derived from the sale of their original land. The income from these funds is paid in the form of subsistence and clothing, live stock, and tools. An agent is appointed for each tribe or group of tribes, for the purpose of regulating its relations with the Government, and of providing and issuing these supplies. With few exceptions, the Indians still retain the tribal organization, although, with their progress in civilization, their forms of self-government have undergone some changes. The five civilized tribes have, besides the principal and the subordinate chiefs, a council, which corresponds in many respects to the legislature of a State. They also have simple codes of laws, and courts to enforce them. The territory has no representation in the national Government. For the enforcement of United States laws it is attached to the western judicial district of Arkansas.

It is difficult to obtain correct estimates of the number of Indians in the territory, as many of them lead a wandering life. No accurate census has been taken, and the only data available are the estimates made by the Indian agents. The report of Indian affairs for 1879 contains the estimates given in the following table, which also shows the areas of the different reservations :—

| Tribes. | Pop. | Area, sq. miles. | Tribes. | Pop. | Area, sq. miles. |
|-------------|-------|---------------------|---------------|--------|---------------------|
| Cheyenne.. | 3,593 | } 6,715 | Peoria | } 184 | 78 |
| Arapahoe.. | 1,903 | | Miami | | |
| Kiowa..... | 1,138 | | Modoc | | |
| Comanche | 1,552 | } 5,800 | Wyandot ... | 99 | 6 |
| Apache. . | 315 | | Ottawa . . | 260 | 33 |
| Wichita.... | 209 | | Seneca..... | 140 | 23 |
| Kaw. | 360 | } 2,447 | Shawnee. ... | 235 | 82 |
| Osage | 2,135 | | Sac and Fox. | 800 | 20 |
| Quapaw .. | 188 | | Kickapoo ... | 573 | 750 |
| Pawnee.... | 1,440 | } 442 | Pottawat- } | 325 | 900 |
| Ponca | 530 | | tamie.. } | | |
| Nez Percé.. | 370 | | Cherokee... . | | |
| Waco | 49 | .. | Creek..... | 20,000 | 7,861 |
| Towaconie. | 155 | .. | Choctaw ... | 14,500 | 5,025 |
| Keechie ... | 75 | .. | Chickasaw .. | 16,500 | 10,450 |
| Caddo | 543 | .. | Seminole | 7,000 | 7,267 |
| Delaware.. | 81 | .. | | 2,500 | 312 |

The total number, according to these estimates, is 78,142. The white population living

in the territory is very small, consisting almost exclusively of the agents and their dependants, the garrisons at a few military posts, and the employees of the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railway, which crosses the eastern portion of the territory.

Several of the tribes, notably the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles, have made considerable advance in civilization. All the members of the above tribes wear the ordinary dress, live in houses, and are engaged in civilized pursuits. Their occupations are almost entirely farming and stock-raising, principally the former. They support schools, which are attended by a large proportion of the children of the tribes.

The following tables, taken from the report on Indian affairs for 1879, illustrate the progress made by these five tribes:—

| | Popula- tion. | Number of houses occupied. | Number attending school. | Amount spent on education, 1879. | Number who can read. |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Cherokees..... | 20,000 | 4,800 | 3,200 | 74,000 | 16,000 |
| Choctaws..... | 16,500 | 4,500 | 1,400 | 30,000 | 11,000 |
| Creeks | 14,500 | 4,300 | 800 | 28,356 | 3,500 |
| Chickasaws.... | 7,000 | 1,900 | 650 | 22,000 | 2,600 |
| Seminoles..... | 2,500 | 750 | 200 | 2,500 | 550 |

Agricultural Products in 1879.

| | Acres culti- vated. | Wheat, bushels. | Oats and Barley, bushels. | Indian Corn, bushels. | Vege- tables, bushels. | Hay, tons. |
|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Cherokees.. | 80,000 | 350,000 | 125,000 | 700,000 | 150,000 | 60,000 |
| Choctaws .. | 90,000 | 140,000 | 35,000 | 600,000 | 85,000 | 50,000 |
| Creeks.... | 60,000 | 65,000 | 20,000 | 95,000 | 60,000 | 50,000 |
| Chickasaws | 30,000 | 10,000 | 20,000 | 420,000 | 40,000 | 15,000 |
| Seminoles . | 13,000 | 400 | 500 | 200,000 | 1,700 | 1,500 |

In 1878 there were 263,000 acres in the territory under cultivation by Indian labor ; 503,000 bushels of wheat were produced, 3,038,000 of Indian corn, 220,000 of oats and barley, 339,000 of vegetables, and 120,000 tons of hay. The live stock consisted of 59,200 horses, 249,000 cattle, 189,400 swine, and 22,500 sheep.

The population of the five civilized tribes is almost entirely rural. There are no large towns. The principal settlements are Tahlequah, the capital of the Cherokee nation ; Cad-do, in the Choctaw, Muscogee in the Creek, and Tishomingo in the Chickasaw country, and Vinita, a railroad town on the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas line.

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